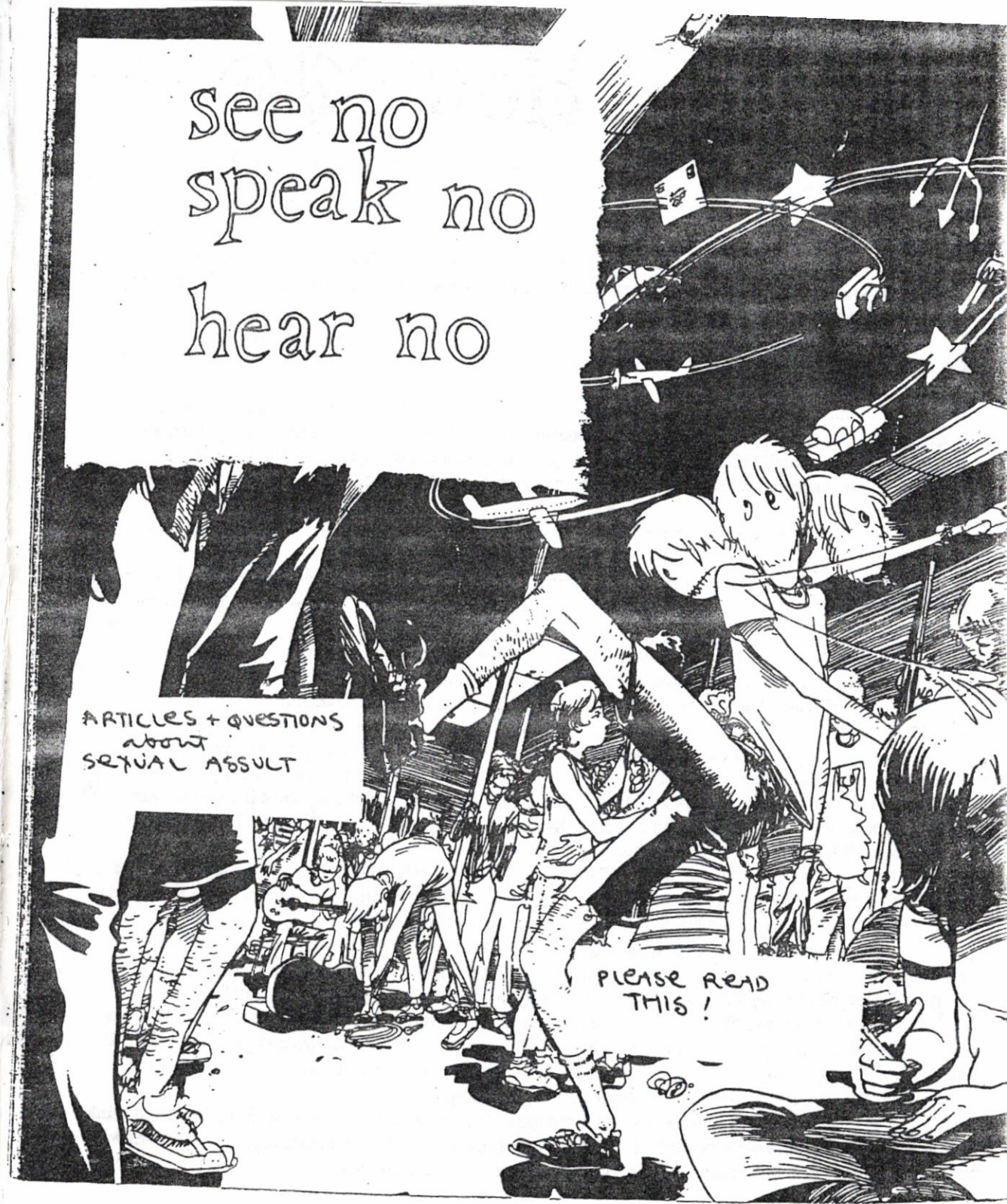


art from "Uskie Trelie" by Nate Powell



introduction



It is confusing and impossible to write this introduction because it is such a difficult subject and it's been hard for me to let myself be alone long enough to really think about why these writings and questions are important to me.

Discussions about sexual abuse and sexual assault and rape in our community (by "community" I'm not even exactly sure what I mean) has been alternately hopeful and supportive and frustrating and infuriating.

A lot of people are scared to talk honestly. It's scary and hard for people to look at how they might participate in cycles of abuse. It is often assumed that we, as antiauthoritarians or radicals, are somehow beyond sexually abusive behavior, but the truth is that abuse happens all the time in our community, on different levels and in different ways and we need to be able to talk about it and figure out how to change it.

I am not trying to point fingers, place blame, or make people feel guilt. I want to help start a more honest dialogue.

I am hoping this will help people talk about and understand the fact that people have different definitions and different ideas of what is acceptable behavior or what feels right to them. There's no simple rules or straight forward answers, which is why it feels so important to look at ourselves honestly and be willing to admit that there are times when we might have done something wrong. People have to be willing to recognize their own abusive behavior in order to change it.

I am thinking about conversations I've had where people refused to believe that they had done something fucked up to me. It was like they couldn't believe they were capable of that kind of thing so they pushed the blame on to me, like I was overreacting or over sensitive, or that it was my responsibility, as someone who has a long history of sexual abuse, to communicate when I feel uncomfortable, because it's "my" issue and no one can read my mind, so I need to just speak up, and it's my fault if I don't. I just can't agree with that way of thinking. I don't want to live in a world that looks like that, and I can't believe people could think it was as simple as that.

Personally, I can't always say "no," or "stop, I feel uncomfortable," or "can we slow down," or "go away." I can't get my brain to perform the seemingly simplest function, to communicate those words to my mouth, words that I need but that have been taken away from me.

I know there will be people who read this and understand on a very personal level what I'm talking about. I know there are also people who will read this, and will think that they understand all this, but it will only be in a hypothetical or intellectual way. Maybe some people have already been to workshops or read some stuff about abuse and they might think they get it already and don't need to read this or think about it any more. I am afraid there will be others who will read this and think, secretly, "I just don't get why people don't say no when they don't want to do something, then we wouldn't have these problems. It's really their fault if they don't say anything."

I am asking all of you to believe us. I am asking you to set aside some time to read this and think deeply about the articles we republished here and the questions we are asking. Please read the questions with an honest voice, not an accusing or defensive one. Please don't dismiss this.

→ there are some folks for whom
openness is not about the burning of.

"will I choose to share
this or that," but
rather, "will I
survive - will
I stay alive?"

and openness
is about how
to be well &
telling the
truth is about
how to put the
broken bits &
pieces of the
heart back
together again

It is about
being who
being wholehearted

hell hooks

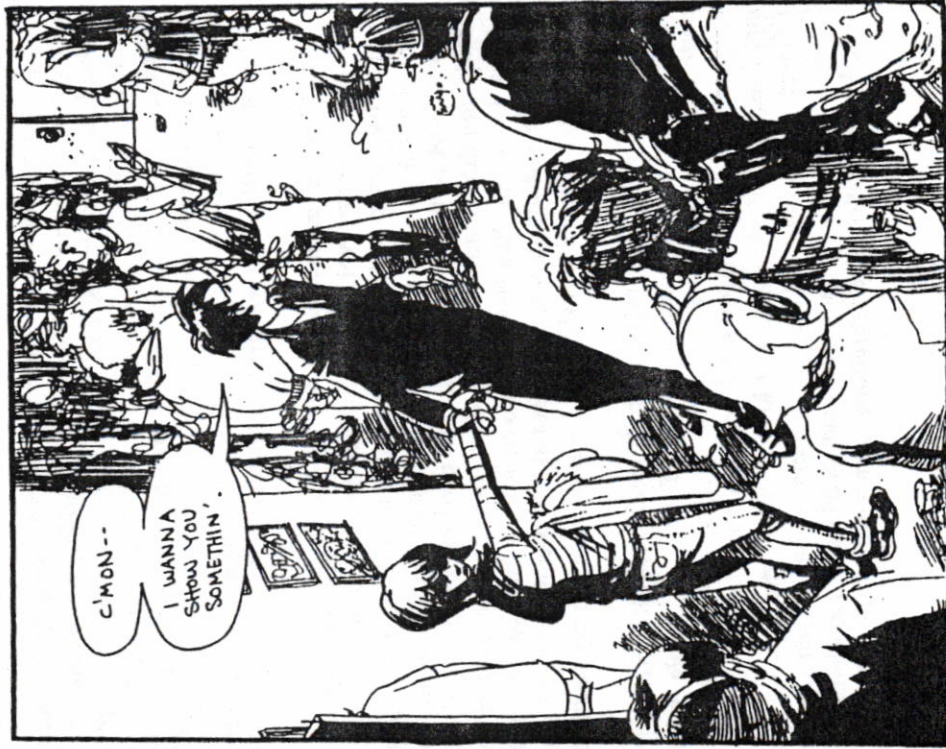
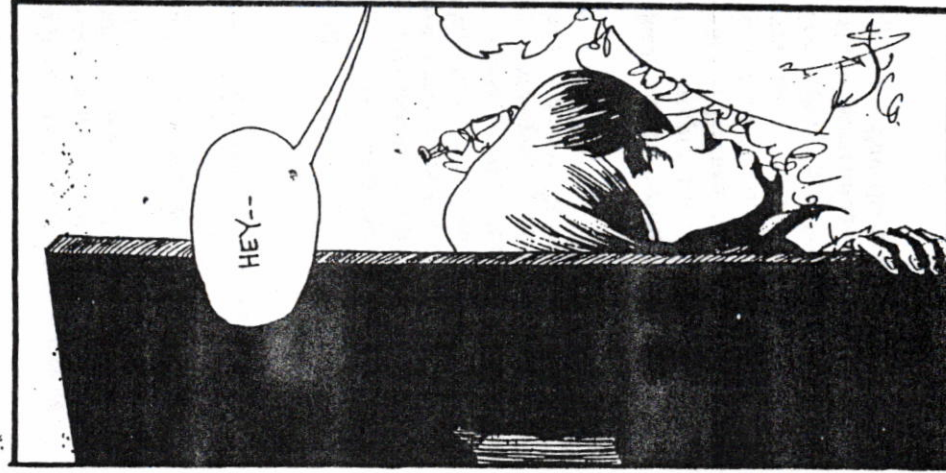


we talked for a long time and it was surprisingly good dialog. he admitted what had happened and had fully realized it after the email that i had sent. he had been unaware of it and had been so shocked that he began to familiarize himself with rape and other women's issues became more aware with what it is- how the dynamics can work. it's too much to write what was exchanged. nothing that he said could negate the fact that the situation occurred but the conversation was a fucking milestone in my healing. some kind of beginnings of a resolution. something happened during that 4+ hours that lifted the shit off my back. i didn't want to beat his ass, had asked my friends to respect my wishes and had waited a long time for this meeting to take place. it was worth it but i don't want to insinuate that this outcome resolved it for me. it isn't some kind of formula that if used, will in anyway rectify any rape, ever. every rape committed is situationally different and this is how i chose to deal with it and i have yet to even confront the dude from the first time. i can't outline how to approach other people who sexually violated anyone but can say that positive support and understanding is a key point in trying to help. listening and not trying to really question one's experience about what really saying is very important. there's nothing like a dumbass saying that your experience what otherwise because it was done by a friend or a person in the community- not some wildass on the street that you didn't know.

its so hard to sit here and write about this when it's so fuckin' and still very confusing and depressing to think about. the only thing that i can really emphasize community and to seek and/or provide a supportive environment/ thing and listening is equally as important. honesty is an amazing literally saved my life and my mind. i'm not embarrassed to talk about it anymore and not afraid to question peoples anterior motives. am able to get my toughness and say, "hey wait, no, this is not gonna happen," when things get out of control. fuck it- somehow i'm moving on and am trying to pull something positive out of this. to provide my experience as a possible means for anyone that it might apply to and to give strength and open support to anyone that has had to deal with any of this. this is just how i dealt with it and just by writing this, reading it over, proofreading it, talking about it with so many people, and then typing out this final draft- something has happened and it means alot to me.

I have watched my friends and community struggle with sexual assault and rape in brave and honest ways, but have also seen so much denial and reactionary behavior and dishonesty and bad excuse. I need to believe that this will change and I hope that by trying to initiate a more in depth, open and honest conversations, we can build a better, safer community where communication and respect is possible.

PLEASE COME TO THE WORKSHOP WE
ARE SETTING UP AT THE BIG IDEA
CAROLINA LANE WED SEPT 10
7:00 to 9:00



Long Way to Go

close friend of mine made the following observation during a recent conversation on behavior within radical and subcultural ranks: "Isn't it strange that as many victims of sexual abuse as there are in our community, that virtually no one ever comes out publicly as having been an adult friend in a hotel room and threatened to cause her father severe loss of business if she ever said a word. I thought of a two year long, major East Coast situation that has permanently scarred too many women to count, wrecked long-term friendships and played out publicly at conferences and demos and worst of all on internet chat room sites. I thought of all of the years zig zagging across the country in and out of towns, big and small hearing countless stories of violent, degrading, misogynist behavior. I thought of my friends, my co-workers, my family and lastly I thought of myself."

I reflect back on my teenage years and of my grand quest to lose my virginity, late nights of plotting and scheming and boosting my confidence and machismo via a bottle of vodka. I thought of awkward moments in the back seats of cars and of midnight walks through secluded parks. "I promise we'll be together forever if you make this happen. I love you I would never do anything to take advantage of you." I would do and say anything to create a potential situation and if that meant pushing the boundary too far, then I would do that as well. Looking back after nearly a dozen years I can still remember the faces of the women I abused. Scarily, I now know that the way I was behaving was not an exception in their lives, but most definitely the norm.

I looked at my quest for sexual companionship as a big grand adventure with no consequences whatsoever. Taking advantage of someone who was inebriated was common and often irresponsible, unprotected sex was no big deal. If someone became pregnant I simply lied to my parents about a gambling bet I had made that landed me in trouble. Once I got the money out of them, it was off to the abortion clinic and poof, problem solved. No place to have sex, no big deal, lets go break into that abandoned store down the street or do it in your bedroom with your kids asleep beside us. I lived life like there was no tomorrow for a very destructive three-year span. Today when a fifteen year old kid down the street talks to me of all the bitches he has and of his exploits, I feel disgusted and sickened knowing that I was no better in my youth than he is today.

In the early 90's, when I was a teenager, I discovered the local, underground punk music community and quickly immersed myself in it. A whole world of concepts and opportunities presented themselves to me. I learned of Anarchism and class politics. I learned of institutional racism and the prison industry. I learned of non-violence and respect for all life, human and non-human. I learned of a movement of kids all across the country who were my age and who abstained from drugs and alcohol and looked after and supported one another. Through my new favorite band, and point, I learned of sexual misconduct, patriarchy, emotional and psychological abuse and of rape. Unlimited possibilities were presenting themselves to me and I was eager to swallow them all whole.

Sac.

ling spin'drft). n. [var. of
height:—n. a tall, slender
thing.

time flew by and I was doing a lot of shit and working on "healing" myself. I realized that I had to work on REALLY communicating with EVERYONE, whether it be with friends or sexual partners, needed to surround myself with folks that would do the same and that were supportive. I was/am very lucky to have that because otherwise I'd still be stuck in depression. this kind of depression is very dangerous (not to discredit other types of trauma) because it is so personal and so taboo to talk about in our society. I'm not a fucking victim or a survivor. I personally find those terms belittling and problematic. I don't have a word for it myself and don't want anything tagged onto it. almost a year and a half later, we're on tour and pull up to a house in west philly where the show is gonna be. I see the shadowy figure that I instinctively know is him, leaving quickly from the house. a few questions are asked to the awesome ladies there confirms my suspicions- he's been hanging out in town. I'm freaking out again, the old horrible feelings coming back, pulling me back into morbidity. except that I'm more confident now, more able to express myself, ten times more tough than I ever was. after the show, that lucky was at a sweetass ladies house that made me feel so empowered, I went looking for him. two ladies accompanied me to the squat where he was staying and all four of us walked over to the abandoned oil refinery. he looked scared, like we were bringing him over there to beat his ass and I was pretty terrified myself. I had brought my mace with me if for some reason he was going to be agro about all of this. when we separated from the others, he blurted out, "do you really think that I did that to you?" I remained calm and answered, "hey listen, we're gonna talk about this in a non-confrontational manner okay? I didn't come here to beat you up." that set the tone and fortunately de-escalated any situation that he might've felt going on.

re, the long, thin rod used for
and holding the spun thread;
ing by hand, a round stick,
at each end, on which the

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Previous | Next

Date: Thu, 23 Aug 2001 04:50:49 -0400

From: brazenhussyusa@netscape.net

To:

DAVE,

if you want to know why i have been avoiding you, (i saw you in portland but would rather not have) than maybe you should be schooled in consensual sex. being drunk and whatever happened was not something that i would have preferred to happen.

i have tried to play it off for months that it was just something stupid that happened but in reality it was a violation of my personal space and body. i have tried to think that because you were younger than me and less experienced that you didn't have a full understanding or the knowledge but fuck that. for personal reference, i do not go running around calling people rapists but this shit has bothered me enough and i feel that at least you should know why i'd rather not see you again in my life.

i don't have the time to deal with this kind of shit and feel poorly about myself. that fact that you keep trying to communicate with me makes me sick in my stomach and i wish that you would stop forever and just leave me alone.

condoms don't make sex consensual.
just because you didn't beat me doesn't make it okay.
when you came around afterwards and i still kissed you-
doesn't mean that i really wanted to.

i felt really uncomfortable with the circumstance and just wanted you to get the fuck out of town.

so in conclusion, i feel that you are ignorant in your actions and perhaps you should think before you put your scrawny dick in someone else- male or female.

FUCK OFF- CAROLINE

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For the longest time after my indoctrination into my new community I looked back on my old friends and my old life as being a very tiny percentage of what the vast majority of the population was like. They were backwards; demeaning, ignorant people who didn't know any better and likely never would. I now had all of the answers and was a socially conscious punk rocker who was obviously of a much higher moral and ethical standard than the jocks and rednecks of my high school that I despised equally.

How was it possible that the kids who looked the most outrageous, who posed as the most defiant, who were anti-everything were so much more sensitive and aware and politically correct than the honor roll students, star athletes and college bound kids who lived just down the street from us? Well, despite all of the propaganda and song lyrics and cries for equality and self-empowerment they weren't. It was all a self-congratulatory, posturing crock of shit. The kids in the underground community were just as prone to misconduct, abusive behavior, degrading attitudes and inappropriate comments as any other segment of youth, if not to an even worse degree. The bands, promoters, record store employees, zinesters, label owners and on and on were overwhelmingly young, white males perpetuating the same widespread societal relations of men over womyn that have been carrying on for generations.

In time I moved out on my own, into a punk house with two older guys who had been around for an eternity, I felt respected and honored that these elder statesmen of the scene would give me the opportunity of being able to live with them. On the weekends friends and transient youth would spill into our home from near and far. We would walk down the street to see a show and invite people back to the house to hang out and party well into the night. Oftentimes younger teenage girls would show up and be exposed to a flurry of demeaning behavior that was the norm at our house. At the time I truly didn't think anything of the way I carried myself or the way I communicated with womyn was out of the ordinary. I believed it was just the way things were. I believed that guys unconsciously preyed upon women, and that these were just customary courting practices. To this day I will occasionally pull out a home video I have of that house from so long ago. Looking back on the young, uneducated, kid that I once was terrifies myself all these years later.

Over the years in the beloved punk community of my youth I was involved in dozens of relationships of all variations. Long-term, deeply committed nurturing relationships. Two month long mini relationships, casual sex relationships and one-night stands. Open relationships. Closed relationships. I suppose I was no different than most other young folks exploring who they were and what works for them in their most inter-personal of relations. I challenged myself, I grew, and I learned the importance of communication, of trust, of how to listen, how to read one's body language. I developed an instinctual nature to pick up on when something wasn't right, when I had fucked up, when I had gone too far. I really believed that I had matured and grown enough as an individual that issues of sexism and abuse and misconduct no longer applied to me, or so I thought.

I traveled extensively and eventually moved down the road to Lexington, Kentucky and a year later further still down Interstate 64 to Richmond, Virginia. In Richmond, although still peripherally involved in the punk subculture I became deeply emerged in the local radical community of Food Not Bombs and the General Strike Collective. Through my work with those organizations I came in contact with lots of young, impressionable VCU students who were just becoming aware of the world outside of their suburban hometowns of northern Virginia and on their own for the very first time. As most folks do, I began to date within my social circle.

In my first relationship in Richmond, as a twenty-one year old, I had a nearly year long relationship with a sixteen/seventeen year old. Although I caught a lot of flack for it at the time, I felt comfortably certain that I was very conscious and aware of perceived power dynamics between the two of us. With years of reflection behind me I can see things a lot clearer these days. I issued ultimatums and thinly veiled threats about ending our relationship and even friendship if certain activities carried on. I utilized guilt trips, shit talking and vocally aggressive behavioral patterns anytime my partner would become involved with someone else. With time we split up and gradually drifted further apart over the years.

I've spent a lot of time coming to grips with my authoritative mannerisms in that and other relationships of days gone past and I'd like to think that the person I was then is dead and gone. I'd like to think that I respectfully and consciously evaluate my day to day interactions with women, both in interpersonal relations and in daily exchanges and grade my behavior accurately and fairly. I study friends, co-workers, neighbors and strangers regularly. I notice their body language, their tone of voice, their jokes and generally feel I can gauge what type of private person they might be. I wonder if anyone ever does this with me, and if so what impressions they're left with?

In the fall of '98, just a few weeks before I became involved with my current partner, I had a very brief primarily physical relationship, with a woman six years my junior. She was a freshman at the university and was starting to show up at events and meetings regularly. I thought highly of her as she asked difficult questions and challenged all of us greatly on issues of practicality and history. We began hanging out very casually at first then became somewhat intimate shortly thereafter. One night early on in this period I stayed at her dorm room and we engaged in heavy petting and extreme physical contact. I envisioned what had happened rather naively as casual and thought nothing much of it. A few days later I saw her walking down the street as I was biking past. I rode up beside her and started talking and realized that she was completely ignoring me. At first, I thought she was playing some kind of a joke, so I laughed and rode away thinking it was an odd encounter. After this happened a couple of times more I realized that something was most definitely wrong, but really had no indication what.

Although I was concerned with what was going on, I honestly didn't read into it hardly at all. I was entering the early stages of what became a long-term relationship and my mind was caught up with that. As time wore on I thought less and less of that night and of the ensuing situation as days spilled into weeks and months and years and then my past and inability to effectively and responsibly deal with it came crashing back into my life, nearly three years later. Without reiterating what has been spelled out time and time again on the internet, at conferences, in national publications and even in the pages of this very zine, shit went down big time here in Richmond a couple of summers back. A serial sexual assaulter became exposed and the entire anarchist and punk rock communities on the East Coast became embroiled in a long, drawn out affair that has yet to be fully resolved and in all likelihood probably never will.

BULLSHIT *all*

REPRINTED FROM "BRAZEN HUSSY"
BY CAROLINE

I couldn't deal with it anymore. I hated feeling trapped and hating myself, confused like I did something wrong. That things weren't right. Not able to sleep, taking showers incessantly and unable to interact with the opposite sex without thinking that things were going to spiral out of control. Things weren't right and I knew when it started to feel like this but I wouldn't talk about it. Why? It had happened before when I was 18 and I had been able to finally express myself at age 18 but not this time. At 21, I was dealing with rape again and I had this mindframe of, "no, it couldn't have happened again, he didn't drag me into the bushes, etc... If I say anything, nobody will believe me cause more than once means that you're a slut right?" making excuses and trying to force myself to believe that while I went wacko in my mind, something was severely fucked and I wouldn't acknowledge it.

months passed and Kasey and I went traveling. In Portland, in a ghetto market, buying beer. He comes in. I have never been so frightened in my life. I started shaking, tugging at Jimbo's arm while frantically whispering, "we gotta get out of here, we gotta go." The rest of the trip was overshadowed by the fear of running into him again and the thing is that he had no clue. No idea what kind of damage that had occurred to my psyche, to my life in all regards. I just told Kasey and Jimbo that he was some boy that I didn't want to deal with.

I get back to Gainesville and my friend is over visiting, asking me questions about my trip. I mention about seeing the kid and she senses my uncomfortableness. Asks questions, lots of them and specific. In the end she says, "Caroline, I don't understand why you're making excuses, why his age or life experience makes any fucking difference- that's rape." It seems so vivid when I remember this, how we were sitting at the bar in my kitchen, me staring at the wood grain, trying to block out her words. When she said "that's rape," I felt so relieved that someone had finally said it since I refused to believe it myself. I freaked out but in a different way than I had been- it was for the first time. It's shocking but at least the beginnings towards some sort of healing- resolution- something besides a "dirty" secret. That conversation changed my life, made me realize what was going on in my crazed life/mind, why when I was upset, I choose to pick up a bottle of booze. I emailed the kid, telling him to stay away from me and

What if days or months or years later someone tells you they were uncomfortable with what you did. Do you grill them?

Do you initiate conversations about safe sex and birth control (if applicable)?

Do you think saying something as vague as "I've been tested recently" is enough?

Do you take your partners concerns about safe sex and/or birth control seriously?

Do you think that if one person wants to have safe sex and the other person doesn't really care, it is the responsibility of the person who has concerns to provide safe sex supplies?

Do you think if a person has a body that can get pregnant, and they don't want to, it is up to them to provide birth control?

Do you complain or refuse safe sex or the type of birth control your partner wants to use because it reduces your pleasure?

Do you try to manipulate your partner about these issues?

Are you usually attracted to people with a certain kind of gender presentation?

Have you ever objectified someone's gender presentation?

Do you assume that each person who fits a certain perceived gender presentation will interact with you in the same way?

Do you find yourself repeating binary gender behaviors, even within queer relationships and friendships? How might you doing that make others feel?

Do you view sexuality and gender presentation as part of a whole person, or do you consider those to be exclusively sexual aspects of people?

If someone is dressed in drag, do you take it as an invitation to make sexual comments?

Do you fetishize people because of their gender presentation?

Do you think only men abuse?

Do you think that in a relationship between people of the same gender, only the one who is more "manly" abuses?

Do you think there is on going work that we can do to end sexual violence in our communities?

As the East Coast situation unraveled over the course of several months, many women intimately or indirectly involved came out vocally in opposition to the overly macho infighting and posturing being carried out exclusively by elder statesmen of the anarchist community on the internet. In time more voices rose to the surface from women, who felt very frustrated and alienated, with the lack of support they had received when they came public with news of similar instances of sexual misconduct. Victim's felt the climate created the appropriate timing for them to come public with their own stories and histories of being abused, manipulated and sexually assaulted, and the stories did indeed start to come forth. I was living in Florida for the winter and felt about as far removed from things as one possibly could have. In one moment that all changed.

I received word via the telephone that someone from my past had come forward and informed my friends of a situation where she felt I sexually violated and took advantage of her. My mind raced through many faces and fading memories of kissing and sex games at parties. I thought of one or two date long relations. I thought of sleepovers and of my sexual past and I was scrambling trying to put a finger on what I perceived to be at issue. Finally I was contacted and told that the woman who was coming forward was the same person who had suddenly stopped talking to me after the night we spent together years earlier. She was requesting an intervention. I returned back to Richmond early from my extended stay in Florida to attend the mediated session. The mediation was carried out by the woman who was first approached by the woman from my past, and a friend of mine of many years who was approved in addition to the other mediator. My partner and her partner were present as well.

On the night of the mediation, the walk to the house where it was to take place seemed to take an eternity despite the brief fifteen minutes that it was. My partner, Y, walked beside me and let me know that she was there not just because she expected me to be accountable and responsible, but very much because she was standing as an ally and supporter to a fellow woman who had been victimized by a man. My nerves were shot. The lumps in my throat were keeping me from breathing well. I was sweating intensely and shaking uncontrollably and then we began. Looking intently in the eye of the woman who was confronting me, while listening carefully to her every word, I desperately tried to recreate that night in my head. She spoke with clarity and conviction as if the past two and a half years were only last week. I responded when asked to, saying little and being as aware as possible of my motions and the way I was holding myself. I had never sat in a room with someone who very clearly and obviously hated and despised me. I don't think I've ever felt lower in my life.

As I sat in that room and listened to her recollect her account of our encounter I grasped desperately to my long since forgotten memories of the occasion and drew a blank. I knew where I differed from her story as well as where we mutually agreed. What will haunt me for the rest of my life is the gray area that I don't recall, but could very much be a reality. One could spend an eternity picking through the inner details of said situation and one hundred different folks could interpret things one hundred different ways. Interpretation is not something I concern myself with these days. It is selfish, it is accusatory, and it is a means of challenging an individual's inner most emotions and putting them on trial. It is a dangerous, counter-productive, slippery slope that leads only to further emotional and psychological damage to the abused and clouds the very real issue of accountability the assaulter needs to work through. I have been an assaulter before; I am working to ensure that I never am again.

Reflecting back now, a year and a half since the mediation there are still many tough questions that I'm asking myself about my public and private perceptions of this woman and of my reaction to all that she has brought forth. Prior to being notified of her desire for mediation, I rarely thought of her or our brief relations. When I did occasionally see her on the streets or in a public setting thoughts would run through my head of how I thought she was disturbed or psychotic. I never shared these sentiments with others, but undeniably harbored them within. While I sat across a narrow room from her with four others at the mediation, I wondered to myself of the validity of her story? Had I really committed all of those horrendous acts, wouldn't I have noticed? Wasn't I socially conscious and aware to a degree that I can distinguish wrong from right? I realize now the unbelievable insensitivity I was displaying by validating myself in her darkest of hours. She was spilling out years of fury and anger and outrage at me and I was internally comforting myself through the entirety of it.

As recently as the beginning of this year, I knowingly and selfishly violated her once again. I made a conscious effort to stay in close proximity to her at a public gathering after I swore to her that I would immediately remove myself from any such situation; as one of her demands of me, a year prior. So, for four years now I have sexually, mentally, emotionally and vocally violated this woman through my actions, my remarks and my assumptions. What in the world have I learned about myself and my activities one might wonder?

I have learned that all men, regardless of their social and political education have the capacity and ability to victimize and assault women every day in ways that we can only begin to imagine. We do it with our vocabulary, our gestures, our mannerisms and our body language. We do it in subtle ways that we never even realize. We do it in blatant ways that we champion as asserting our manliness. We do it with those we are in relationships with. We do it to our mothers and sisters and daughters. We do it professionally through workplace discrimination and in the political sphere. We do it socially in our friendships and acquaintances. In short, there are very few moments when we aren't violating half of the population of the world. I'm guilty of this behavior, more than my fair share of the time.

Gradually, I'm working through my own inappropriateness, while stepping up to the plate and challenging those around me to take a closer look at their own shortcomings. I believe to be truly engaged in the healing process, one must be responsible not only to themselves and their immediate community, but indeed to the entirety of those they come in contact with on a daily basis. Just as I work on my own behavior by evaluating and reevaluating my dialogue and interaction, I study intently the activity and communication of those around me. I mentally compare my movement and conversation with the deficiencies I witness in my co-workers, my neighbors as well as those I pass on the street. Am I much better than the sleazy businessman? What about the drunken frat guy? How am I any different than these unsavory individuals? This is just one of countless exercises that one who is coming to grips with their behavior can engage in on a daily basis. Healing takes on many different faces and forms. Indeed, there are as many differing techniques for accountability as there are individuals working through their own internal destructive behavioral patterns. The only truly wrong way to begin the process of healing is to pretend as if there is no problem. No matter who you might be, don't ever doubt that there isn't room for improvement within yourself.

What are positive aspects of drinking for you? What are negative aspects?

Have you been sexual with people when you were drunk or when they were drunk? Have you ever felt uncomfortable or embarrassed about it the next day? Has the person you were with ever acted weird to you afterward?

Do you seek consent in the same way when you are drunk as when you're sober?

Do you think it is important to talk the next day with the person you've been sexual with if there has been drinking involved? If not, is it because it's uncomfortable to talk about or because you think something might have happened that shouldn't have? Or is it because you think that's just the way things go?

Do you think people in general need to take sex more lightly?

Do you think all these questions are repressive and people who look critically at their sexual histories and their current behavior are uptight or should be more "liberated"?

Do you think liberation might be different for different people?

How do you react if someone becomes uncomfortable with what you're doing, or if they don't want to do something? Do you get defensive? Do you feel guilty? Does the other person end up having to take care of you and reassure you or are you able to step back and listen and hear them and support them and take responsibility for you actions?

Do you tell your side of the story and try and change the way they experienced the situation?

Do you do things to show your partner that you're listening and that you're interested in their ideas about consent or their ideas about what you did?

Do you ever talk about sex and consent and abuse when you are not in bed?

Have you ever raped or sexually abused or sexually manipulated someone? Are you able to think about your behavior? Have you made changes? What kinds of changes?

Are you uncomfortable with your body or your sexuality?

Have you been sexually abused?

Has your own uncomfortableness or your own abuse history caused you to act in abusive ways? If so, have you ever been able to talk to anyone about it? Do you think talking about it is/could be helpful?

Do you avoid talking about consent or abuse because you aren't ready to or don't want to talk about your own sexual abuse?

Do you ever feel obligated to have sex?

Do you ever feel obligated to initiate sex?

Do you think it's your responsibility or role to overcome another person's hesitancy by pressuring them or making light of it?

Have you ever tried asking someone what they're feeling? If so, did you listen to them and respect them?

Do you think sex is a game?

Do you ever try to get yourself into situations that give you an excuse for touching someone you think would say no if you asked? I.e. Dancing, getting really drunk around them, falling asleep next to.

Do you make people feel "unfun" or "unliberated" if they don't want to try certain sexual things? ?

Do you think there are ways you act that might make someone feel that way even if it's not what you're trying to do?

Do you ever try and make bargains? I.e. "If you let me _____, I'll do _____ for you"?

Have you ever used jealousy as a means of control?

Have you made your partner(s) stop hanging out with certain friends, or limit their social interactions in general because of jealousy or insecurity?

Do you use jealousy to make your partner feel obligated to have sex with you?

Do you feel like being in a relationship with someone means that they have an obligation to have sex with you?

What if they want to abstain from sex for a week? A month? A year?

Do you whine or threaten if you're not having the amount of sex or kind of sex that you want?

Do you think it's ok to initiate something sexual with someone who's sleeping?

What if the person is your partner?

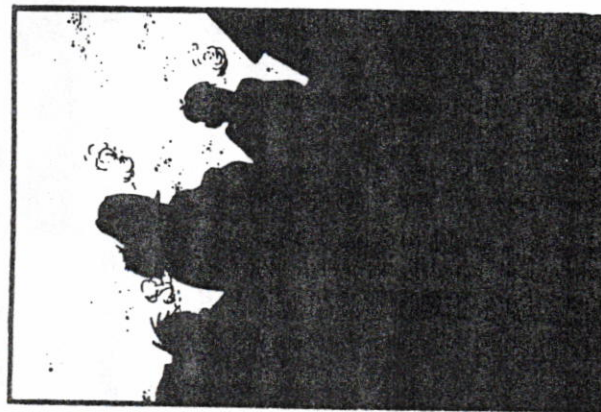
Do you think it's important to talk with them about it when they're awake first?

Do you ever look at how you interact with people or how you treat people, positive or negative, and where that comes from/ where you learned it?

Do you behave differently when you've been drinking?

As a white male anarchist who is well traveled and widely known throughout the country, I feel that I am ultimately responsible for perceptions of my character and my past. I do not want any of you as my friends or allies to feel as if you are so close to me that you automatically assume I have moved beyond the stories of my past that I have just unfurled to you. For I myself, would be a fool to draw such conclusions. I, like most of my closest of male friends, in the radical community are all in some way or another complicit in the disgusting cycle of abuse. We are born into a society that perpetuates it. We are force fed 13 years of indoctrination of dominant/subordinate gender roles in the classroom. We are witnesses to it in the household, the workplace, in social circles, in popular media, in sports, in entertainment. In every sphere of life, public and private, these patronizing, demeaning behavioral patterns are repeated time and again ad nauseam. Just because you've read Emma Goldman's autobiography doesn't mean you're a saint. Attending a workshop or two on domestic abuse doesn't mean that I have any remote concept of the harassment and fear a woman encounters walking down the street on a daily basis.

I am nearing thirty now, and I have only just begun to scratch the surface of the staggering amount of work and education that I need to get through before I can truly call myself an ally. So please when you see me in your town, when you communicate with me via mail or computer, please bring all of your assumptions about the quality of my character along. I'll respect you far greater in the long run if you speak frankly with me today. I'll appreciate your friendship more ten years down the road if you critique it today by calling me on my irresponsibility. All I want you to expect is honesty, sincerity, the truth and a commitment from me to you of challenge, and dedication to making myself and all of the others around us a better, more responsible, compassionate population. I expect nothing less of you.



QUESTIONS:

Please read and think honestly about these questions one at a time. We wrote these questions hoping to provoke thought, and so we're asking you not to be defensive, and to think about them deeply, because that's the only way that this can really help you and your community. It's really important to us that you come to the workshop that will be on ~~Wednesday 7-9~~ ^{at THE BLEBBER in Carolina Lane}, where some of these questions will be explored and you can ask your own questions.

write your own questions or issues you want discussed at the workshop - there will be a question box.

How do you define consent?

Have you ever talked about consent with your partner(s) or friends?

Do you know people, or have you been with people who define consent differently than you do?

Have you ever been unsure about whether or not the person you were being sexual with wanted to be doing what you were doing? Did you talk about it? Did you ignore it in hopes that it would change? Did you continue what you were doing because it was pleasurable to you and you didn't want to deal with what the other person was experiencing? Did you continue because you didn't want to second guess the other person? Did you continue because you felt it was your duty? How do you feel about the choices you made?

Do you think it is the other person's responsibility to say something if they aren't into what you're doing?

How might someone express that what is happening is not ok?

Do you look only for verbal signs or are there other signs?

Do you think it is possible to misinterpret silence for consent?

Have you ever asked someone what kinds of signs you should look for if they have a hard time verbalizing when something feels wrong?

Do you only ask about these kinds of things if you are in a serious relationship or do you feel comfortable talking in casual situations too?

Do you think talking about it ruins the mood?

Do you think consent can be erotic?

Do you think about people's abuse histories?

Do you check in as things progress or do you assume the original consent means everything is ok?

If you achieve consent once, do you assume it's always ok after that?

If someone consents to one thing, do you assume everything else is ok or do you ask before touching in different ways or taking things to more intense levels?

Are you resentful of people who want to or need to talk about being abused? Why?

Are you usually attracted to people who fit the traditional standard of beauty as seen in the united states?

Do you pursue friendship with people because you want to be with them, and then give up on the friendship if that person isn't interested in you sexually?

Do you pursue someone sexually even after they have said they just want to be friends?

Do you assume that if someone is affectionate they are probably sexually interested in you?

Do you think about affection, sexuality and boundaries? Do you talk about these issues with people? If so, do you talk about them only when you want to be sexual with someone or do you talk about them because you think it is important and you genuinely want to know?

Are you clear about your own intentions?

Have you ever tried to talk someone into doing something they showed hesitancy about?

Do you think hesitancy is usually a form of flirting?

Are you aware that in some instances it's not?

Have you ever thought someone's actions were flirtatious when that wasn't actually the message they wanted to get across?

Do you think that if someone is promiscuous that makes it ok to objectify them, or talk about them in ways you normally wouldn't?

If someone is promiscuous, do you think it's less important to get consent?

Do you think that if someone dresses in a certain way it makes it ok to objectify them?

If someone dresses a certain way do you think it means that they want your sexual attention or approval?

Do you understand that there are many other reasons, that have nothing to do with you, that a person might want to dress or act in a way that you might find sexy?

